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ABSTRACT

Inversion constructions (declarative sentence constructions in which the subject follows part or all of its verb phrase) are distributed over the whole range of spoken and written language, not along the spoken-written dimension but along a colloquial-literary dimension. Some of these inversions are colloquial or literary for functional reasons, some for reasons having to do with the properties of their component parts, and some are just conventionally colloquial or literary, to be learned like the conventions of capitalizing certain letters and writing from left to right. The various types of inversions have been examined and classified into the following areas: (1) positively literary inversions, such as "said Mary," "such is the case," and "be it resolved"; (2) perfectly colloquial inversions, such as "here comes John," "was he mad," and "so do I"; and (3) the larger set of inversions that, while characteristic of either literary writing or conversational speech, may also be found in literary speech or colloquial writing, respectively. The analysis of these types of inversions has implications for a general theory of linguistic competence, indicating both the presence of these inversions and their appropriate use. (Several examples are offered of each type of inversion, with a concluding section explaining the nature of their classification.) (RL)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF READING

Technical Report No. 217

COLLOQUIAL AND LITERARY USES OF INVERSIONS

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Colloquial and Literary Uses of Inversions

Inversion constructions such as those in (1) and (2) have been largely neglected in the recent study of English syntax, with the conspicuous exception of some descriptive Scandinavian studies, and scattered remarks in the transformational literature.

(1a) Here comes the bus.

(1b) Was he mad!

(1c) So does Chomsky.

(2a) "It's just the same old wolf at the door," said Mary, soberly. (TLCC, p. 84)[1]

(2b) Such is the terrible man against whom Peter Pan is pitted. (PP, p. 72)

(2c) No man, be he good or bad, can make his memoirs unfailingly interesting without embroidering the facts.

Apparently the assumption has been that inversions are all "literary," and therefore, not a part of "real language" like comparatives or relative clauses, and thus, of no particular interest to a descriptive linguistics with universal aspirations. One of my main intentions here is to show that the first premise in this argument is false--several inversions are basically colloquial in character, and not a few more may be used in a literary style of speech. I will take pains along the way to show that it is not on the basis of spoken versus written language that speakers discriminate contexts for inversions, but on the basis of colloquial versus

literary language, a related, but by no means isomorphous, distinction. In addition, this study may be taken to indicate that the ordinary monolingual native speaker, in knowing what kinds of literary inversions can be used in colloquial language, and when, and vice versa, demonstrates a considerable knowledge of code-switching.

Although the title appears to be perfectly straightforward and descriptive, I will begin by explaining it (in Inversions), and attempting to relate this work to previous work on functions of inverted constructions (Previous Research). The section Sources discusses the sources for the inversions used here to exemplify the classes of constructions whose use is at issue.

The two small sets of inversions that are characteristically found in literary and conversational discourse will be described in Positively Literary Inversions and Perfectly Colloquial Inversions, respectively. Inversions after preposed comparative constructions (e.g., so, such); direct quotations; positive frequency, degree, and manner adverbs; and abstract prepositional phrases (e.g., At issue) are found to be characteristically literary inversions; while inversions after negated verbs; after a restricted class of constructions, including Here comes; after pronominal so and neither; and in exclamations are shown to be basically colloquial constructions.

The section on Literary Speech and Colloquial Writing will be devoted to the larger set of inversions which, while characteristic of either literary writing or conversational speech, may also be found in literary

speech or colloquial writing, respectively. The inversions that occur after nor and preposed negative adverbs; in if-less conditionals; after preposed adjective phrases, and locative and directional prepositional phrases; and after participial phrases are found in literary speech as well as in writing, and those that occur after preposed negated noun phrases (e.g., not a N), in a comparative temporal construction (e.g., No sooner . . . than . . .), after temporal adverbs and prepositional phrases, and after preposed directional adverbs are as characteristic of colloquial writing as they are of speech.

In Explanations for the Colloquial and Literary Character of Inversions, I attempt to account for the colloquial or literary nature of the various inversions. Some inversions are argued to be basically literary (or colloquial) for reasons having to do with the discourse functions that the construction serves, supports, or presupposes. Others seem to have the distribution that they have as a function of the distribution of crucial components. Still others apparently are simply conventionally literary (or colloquial).

Inversions

By inversion, I mean simply those declarative constructions where the subject follows part or all of its verb phrase. However, to limit the scope of this discussion, I will not be treating presentational or existential there-constructions (Aissen, 1975; Bolinger, 1977) or inversion in yes-no questions. I will be distinguishing in this work between inversions like those in (1) and (2) as colloquial and literary, respectively.

At first glance the difference may seem to be one of oral versus written--that the constructions in (1) are characteristic of speech, while those in (2) are limited to written discourse. But, on reflection that is clearly not true. The sentence in (1b) might occur in a novel or a short story, and (1c) might easily be found in an essay or even a scholarly article. The difference is not that of informal versus formal either, if formal is taken in the sense of "rigidly prescribed, for ritual use," for there is nothing particularly formal about (2a). It happens to be an example of a formula that is simply, by cultural custom, restricted to literary narratives, just as constructions like (3) are formulae restricted to legislative contexts.

(3) Be it resolved that copies of this resolution be sent to Professor Bardeen and Representative Satterthwaite.

Example (2a) is so far from being formal that it would sound very out of place indeed in a sermon or a commencement address or a scholarly article, if it were not in an anecdote being recounted for some rhetorical effect. The difference is not that of (relatively) unplanned versus (relatively) planned discourse (contra Ochs, 1979), for <u>all discourse</u> (with the possible exception of utterances like <u>Ow</u>! and <u>Oh</u>, <u>hell</u>!) must be considered to be planned if we are to account for the fact that the speaker must have had to make constituent order, construction type, and lexical <u>choices</u> (Green, in press) to have expressed what she or he expressed the way she or he expressed it, no matter how elegantly or inarticulately. The alternative, saying that some discourse is unplanned, is a deterministic, behavioristic

view of speech production which would fail entirely to account for the phenomena of revisions and hesitations. In any case, (2a) is surely as nearly an automatic choice for the novelist as (1a) or (1b) is for the conversationalist in the street.

One may, of course, question whether the sets in (1) and (2) constitute natural classes, but because the constructions in (1) seem so characteristic of conversation, and those in (2) so characteristic of certain literary genres, I will proceed on the assumption that they do, and will refer to those in (1) as colloquial, because they are typically found in conversational discourse or discourse that is as if conversational, such as letters and other first-person narratives, stream-of-consciousness style, and style indirect libre (see Banfield, 1973). Those inversions in (2) I will refer to as literary, because, if not confined to literary prose, they are characteristic of it and are apparently used in conversation only when the intent is to sound literary.

Previous Research

Most of the published research on the use of inversions has been historically oriented and/or primarily taxonomic (e.g., Jacobsson, 1951; Visser, 1963). Fowler (1923) is also a taxonomy, with prescriptive notes on usage. Jacobsson and Fowler, and also Hartvigson and Jakobsen (1974), are function-based taxonomies, and all or most of the examples are drawn from cited texts. (Fowler is the only native speaker of English, and the only one to devise additional examples). The taxonomies are based partly on syntactic structure and presumed derivation, and partly on discourse

functions perceived by the researchers, but none of the examples are cited in context, nor are the contexts referred to. Writers on the syntax of inversion (e.g., Emonds, 1971, 1976; Green, 1976, 1977) have used constructed examples almost entirely, for justifiable reasons, although a look at examples collected from texts might have prevented a few of the more extreme claims that have been made--for example, that inversions do not occur in embedded clauses (Emonds, 1971).

Gary (1975) and Green (1980) attempt to provide evidence and explanation for certain claimed functions of inversions, though both are somewhat limited in scope. Green (1980), taking off from the exploratory work of Gary, discusses five or so distinct communicative goals served by a number[2] of syntactically and/or distributionally distinguishable main-verb inversion types: a delaying function (see Perfectly Colloquial Inversions below) that gives a speaker time to decide on the proper characterization of the individual who is to be mentioned as the subject, a connective function for the initial phrase, an introductory function that allows an important subject NP to be in rhematic, final position, a puzzle-resolving function (the core of the so-called emphatic function), and related functions of quotation inversions. The examples are a mix of literary[3] citations and constructed variations on them. However, the colloquial-literary dimension of the usage of inversion types is not mentioned. The present work aims to explore a larger class of inversions along a different dimension--how the naturalness of only certain inversion types in both natural speech and established literary genres is related to the nature of colloquial and literary discourse.

Sources

The sources for the numerous literary inversion types I discuss are essays (serious, but mostly nonscholarly) by a number of contemporary writers--the least recent being Thurber and H. W. Fowler; news and feature stories from newspapers modern American short stories; a few novels from the last 100 years, and many children's picture books from the last 40 years; plus assorted random instructions, personal letters, and cereal boxes. The conversational examples are drawn from fabricated conversations in short stories and novels, and from edited transcripts of natural speech (e.g., Terkel, 1974). A few are "found objects" I just happened to overhear, or discover in published analyses of interview transcripts (e.g., Labov, 1972). Unfortunately, these last are somewhat inferior as data as they were transcribed (or presented) without any significant portion of the context in which they occurred. I do not apologize for not using exclusively verbatim transcripts of naturally occurring speech. In the first place, as argued (more articulately) by Lakoff and Tannen (1979) and Prince (Note 1), literary and cinematic presentations of conversation generally represent speech that strikes speakers as perfectly natural, unless the writer is patently mediocre. Readers like myself, with no pretensions of expertise at literary criticism, recognize and reject fabricated dialogue that does not ring true, does not sound as if it could have actually occurred. So, I believe, dialogue in well-written short stories and novels provides as adequate a source for what people think people say as their judgements of grammaticality on fabricated or natural sentences do.[4] One really cannot ask for more.

In the second place, in natural speech, inversions of most types are few and far between. Long ago, I thought that personal narratives would be a good source of a variety of inversions, and with the help of a colleague, obtained a ninety-minute tape of undergraduates telling each other about "scary things that had happened to them, or surprises they might have had." In fifteen anecdotes by nine or ten individuals there was not a single inversion. So I abandoned natural speech as a primary source of inversions for syntactic studies; in ninety minutes I could read enough Dorothy Parker to collect seven or eight inversions.

Finally, certain constructions are so natural in context, that even interested linguists listening for them do not hear them when they occur. At least one colloquial inversion, the adjunctive tag as in (4), is of this sort, and I have noticed but two in reading 700 pages of interview transcripts (Terkel, 1974).

(4) Inversions can be found on cereal boxes, and so can sentence fragments.

Consequently, a few of my colloquial examples, like (1c), are fabricated on the spot.

Positively Literary Inversions

By far the majority of inversions I have found, both in number and in type, are typical of written discourse, whether it be narrative, expository, or journalistic. A smaller proportion is found exclusively in written materials.

Some of those found exclusively in written materials involve language that is very literary, for example the two classes of comparative inversions exemplified in (5) and (6).

(5a) Such is the impact of work on some people. (W, p. xix)

(5b) In so emphatic, consistent, and homogeneous a consensus was born the useful, if quixotic, institution of the professional matchmaker. (JOY, p. 77)

(5c) Thus sharply did the terrified three learn the difference between an island of make-believe and the same island come true. (PP, p. 65)

(6a) But you know, such was my respect for him, that even after I switched to martinis I still ordered sweet manhattans when Gus was behind the bar. (CUC--Groninger, 3-6-77)

(6b) So prevalent has pornography become that sober-minded analysts are trying to get a financial handle on it. (SFC--Moskowitz)

(6c) There came also children's voices, for so safe did the boys feel in their hiding place that they were gaily chatting. (PP, p. 80)

(6d) All its life it had been asleep, but now it hardly got a chance to nod, so swiftly did big events and crashing surprises come along in one another's wake . . . (PW, p. 91)

None of the 19 examples in my files is from a conversational context. I am not claiming that the inversion is responsible for making these sentences sound literary; some of the vocabulary in these examples (e.g., 5b), and

some of the other constructions (e.g., the prenominal predicative adjectives terrified and sober-minded in 5c and 6b) are also basically literary. The point is that while one might use such constructions in writing, one would not use them in conversation and say things like (6e).

(6e) I wish I could write better. I feel like I'm meandering around in the dark, so limited is my knowledge about writing.

On the other hand, the fact that these inversions occur pretty much exclusively in written materials is not a fact about the medium of transmission. One might expect to find examples of these constructions in orally delivered sermons or political speeches, even ones given from notes, rather than fully prepared texts. Rather, they are typical, even symptomatic, of an impersonal, declamatory style that is foreign to the conventions of interpersonal behavior in our culture. They seem to imply an address to a large, impersonal audience (such as the intended readership of a book, remote in time and space from the author). If someone were to use one of these constructions in a conversation, one might suspect him of hallucinating about his audience.

As for quotation inversion, it is simply part of the conventions about communication in our culture that quotation inversion as in (2a) is available for framing exact, direct quotations in literary narratives, but not in conversational narratives. This restriction is part of what it means to be a literary convention. Inversion after preposed quotes is usual when the information in the subject NP is more important and less predictable than information in the verb (Green, 1980; Hermon, 1979), but even when such

conditions prevail in an oral narrative, the use of an inversion like the one in (7) would be unidiomatic to say the least.

(7) The most unnerving thing happened to me this morning. Robin and Dylan and I were at breakfast, eating our cereal, and idly staring at the cereal box, you know? "Sugar is recommended in this cereal," announced/remarked/said Robin. I asked her where it said that. She said, "Nowhere. I want some sugar. There isn't any in here."

Inversion here does not sound pompous or pretentious. It just sounds alien.

Pre-literate children learn this convention just as they learn other literary conventions--from hearing written materials read aloud. In dictating stories, or in pretending to read, they will use this construction along with Once upon a time and other formulae, but it does not carry over into their natural speech. No child would complain with something like (8).

(8) "Mommy, you forgot your gym shoes. Nyaah, nyaah, nyaah, nyaah, nyaah," said all the kids in my room.

Storytellers might use inverted quotations, but in this day and age, storytelling is for the most part no longer an independent oral tradition, but something derivative of written materials, and is more a recitation than creative art. Even in the creative, spontaneous storytelling that I have observed, stories are modelled on the style of written stories, and use all of their conventions. In any case, the fact that quotation inversion is restricted to written material is again not a fact about the medium, nor in this case about the audience, but about the tradition.

Two more inversion types that are stereotypically literary are inversion in comparative clauses (9) and inversion after positive frequency, degree, and manner adverbs (10a-c).

(9) And the establishment of democracy on the American continent was scarcely as radical a break with the past as was the necessity, which Americans faced, of broadening this concept to include black men. (JB, p. 358)

(10a) Often did she visit the inhabitants of that gloomy village.

(10b) Particularly did she commend its descriptions of some of those Italian places. (DP, p. 346 "Little Curtis")

(10c) Bitterly did we repent our decision. (Hartvigson & Jakobsen, 1974, p. 46, citing Jacobsson, 1951, p. 16)

(10c′) Bitterly did he rue it. (Fowler, 1923, p. 11, who probably fabricated it)

Both of these types are relatively rare (the examples in my files number less than ten altogether). I will take them up in order. Fowler finds inversions like (9) generally unnatural and ungraceful (1923, p. 14),[5] and it is hard to disagree with him. Yet, many people, he notes (1923, p. 16), "would write if not say I spend less than do 9 out of 10 people in my position." He speculates that inversion is used "for saving the verb from going unnoticed" at the end, but points out, quite rightly: "So little does that matter that if the verb is omitted, no harm is done." His prescription is to delete the auxiliary or put it in an appropriate place after its subject, which is precisely what people do in speech. An old TV commercial

advised, "Zest makes you feel cleaner than soap." The exuberant voice might have said less ambiguously, "Zest makes you feel cleaner than soap does " but there could be no pretense of natural speech if it had intoned, "Zest makes you feel cleaner than does soap."

The inversions after positive frequency, degree, and manner adverbs have a decidedly archaic flavor, as Hartvigson and Jakobsen note (1974, p. 46). Jacobsson (1951, p. 117) says that this inversion "is now hardly used outside the literary language." However, he cites examples from twentieth century sources, including two from a British mystery that point up the literary nature of this inversion by contrasting the (uninverted) speech of the scullery maid (11a), with the idle musings of the upper-class protagonist, Lord Peter Wimsey, in (11b).

(11a) "He did," said Hannah, "and well I remember it, for Mr. Urquhart asked particular after the eggs, was they new-laid, and I reminded him they was some he had brought in himself that afternoon from that shop on the corner of Lamb's Conduit street where they always have them fresh from the farm, and I reminded him that one of them was a little cracked and he said, 'We'll use that in the omelette tonight, Hannah,' and I brought out a clean bowl from the kitchen [. . .] (DS, p. 78)

(11b) " [. . .] I even took a special course in logic for her sake."

"Good gracious!"

> "For the pleasure of repeating 'Barbara celarent darii ferio baralipton.' There was a kind of mysterious romantic lilt about the thing which was somehow expressive of passion. Many a moonlight night have I murmured it to the nightingales which haunt the gardens of St. Johns--though, of course, I was a Balliol man myself, but the buildings are adjacent." (DS, p. 97)

In contrast to the almost archaic inversion after positive frequency and degree adverbs, inversion after negative frequency and degree adverbs (never, rarely, barely) is, for inversions, common and unremarkable in conversation, on which more below.

But not all "literary" inversions sound like they came out of a dusty book published before 1880. Inversions after preposed direct quotations are fully contemporary, and found in all manner of written narratives, ranging from novels by Mary McCarthy and John Updike to pornographic novels to picture books and basal readers for children. Writers vary considerably in the advantage they take of this construction, but it is much more frequent in children's books than in books for adults.[6]

Another "literary" inversion that is not particularly associated with an elevated or aesthetically valued style is inversion after preposed abstract prepositional phrases, as in (12).

(12a) Of more probable concern to Crane's followers is a feeling Crane didn't come off too well in the first debate. (CUC editorial 10-12-78)

(12b) Against these stories, however, can be set the lost and found columns of the same papers, which in almost every issue carry offers of rewards for the recovery of dogs that, apparently couldn't find their way back from the next block. (Bergen Evans, quoted in JT, p. 114)

(12c) At issue is Section 1401(a) of the Controlled Substances Act. (CUC-Carol Alexander)

(12d) To this list may be added . . .

(12e) In this category belong. . .

I do not have very many examples of this construction (see, however, Lawler, 1977, and Green, 1977, for syntactic argument that hinges entirely on it), but its use seems to be restricted to expository prose, typically journalistic or scholarly-academic prose. Still, if someone were to drop one of these into even a serious intellectual conversation (which seems highly unlikely), the effect would be to make him sound like a stuffed shirt--as in B's (a) response to A in (13).

(13) A: Well, I just don't think any review board composed of nonspecialists can have the expertise to pass judgement on research proposals from faculty members of the College of Medicine.

(a) B: Look, at issue is protection of the subject's right to have all risks of the research disclosed before consenting to participate.

(b) B: Look, what's at issue is protection of . . .

Finally, there are formulaic inversions, like (14), that are used only in formal, written, legal or quasi-legal documents.[7]

(14a) Be it resolved that . . .

(14b) Be it known by all present . . .

Formulae like (2c), be-NP-X or be-NP[+pro]-Y, are typically literary, but might, like many other inversions to be discussed below, be intentionally used in conversation, to create a literary effect.

Perfectly Colloquial Inversions

Probably the most colloquial inversion type--or, at least, the least literary--is the inversion after a negated verb which is documented in a variety of American dialects, as in (15).

(15a) Didn't nobody teach me this. (W, p. 240, N.W., stockchaser)

(15b) It's against the rule; that's why don't so many people do it. (from Labov 1972, p. 812)

(15c) Won't nobody catch us. (from Labov 1972, p. 811)

(15d) I know a way that can't nobody catch us. (from Labov 1972, p. 811)

The subject is usually morphologically negative as well as the verb; the syntactic multiple negation is independently a colloquial construction. This inversion is not found in so-called standard dialects, and it is one of the few inversions which occurs after a negated verb; in almost all other inversions, the verb may not be negated, as shown in (16).

(16a) *"Come and get me!" didn't say Fred.

(16b) *In didn't walk the chairman.

I have seen no examples of inversions like (15) in print that were not reported speech; if one were to get past a copy-editor, say as in (17), I would infer that the author had used it for effect--specifically to create an effect of forceful speech.

(17a) Don't no A-over-A condition prevent the desired ambiguous application in this case.

(17b) Don't no chimpanzees appear to make use of these/no vowel possibilities.

Another positively colloquial inversion is a subclass of inversion after preposed locative adverbs, a formula really:

$$\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{Here}\\ \text{There}\\ \text{Yonder}\end{array}\right\} \left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{comes}\\ \text{goes}\end{array}\right\} \quad \text{NP}$$

as other adverbs and verbs do not occur, as illustrated in (18).

(18a) Here comes the bus. (G.G. p.c.)

(18b) Here goes another somersault.

(18c) There goes the bus.

(18d) (?)There comes Mrs. Romberg.

(18e) *There speeds the bus.

(18f) *Around comes the bus. (no true present reading)

Three out of the first four examples in (18) are constructed. Despite my firm conviction that these are an utterly colloquial form of speech, I have, in fact, collected only one example of this type (18a). So unremarkable are

they that they seem almost invisible, so much so that someone looking for one can hear or see it and not notice it.[8] This construction tends to have no past tense forms; with the possible exception of sentences like (19c), there is no way to report them even in style indirect libre (see Banfield, 1973).

(19a) *Here came the bus.

(19b) *Here went another somersault.

(19c) (?)There came the bus.

(19d) *There went the bus.

Examples like (19d) are not, strictly speaking, ungrammatical, but they cannot be used as a report of sentences like (18c) and (18c); (19d) could be used to describe a bus that has just disappeared from sight. The fact that they cannot be reported in the past tense suggests that they are nonliterary constructions, for if they were literary, one would expect them to occur freely in the past tense, which is the normal and unmarked choice for written chronicles and narratives. In fact, the speech act deixis (here, there) implies that this is basically an oral language construction, though, of course, it is natural in personal letters as well, when writers write as if they were speaking.

In any case, in noncolloquial speech, this construction just sounds out of place. It seems unlikely, for instance, that the next president of the United States would say anything like (20a) in an inaugural address.

(20a) Here comes a time of great challenge for this country.

It seems more likely, that if she or he chose to use the ordinary words come and here, something like (20b) would be used instead.

(20b) We are coming to/upon opportunities here for the spirit of the American people to demonstrate to the rest of the world that [. . .]

Almost as invisible as the Here comes inversion, and at least as common in speech, is inversion after pronominal so and neither, as in (21).

(21a) It'll get your clothes pretty clean, but so will the others. (W, p. 114, J.F., copy-chief)

(21b) A: You never clear your dishes off anymore.
B: Neither do you.

I collected inversions for six years before I ever noticed one of these, which I probably use daily! They do not sound particularly colloquial in literary prose (see 22), but they seem to be much more frequent in speech.

(22a) A well-accepted linguistic principle is that as culture changes, so will the language. (APN, p. 134)

(22b) However, none of the examples in (13) are contrastive, as noted above, and neither are many of the other tokens in the corpus. (EP, p. 22)

There is a literary counterpart, however: inversion after pronominal as, as in (23).

(23) Two of his uncles had been on the force in New York City, as was his father, [. . .] (W, p. 183, S.T.)

In speech, this sounds a bit stilted:

(24) A: Why did you decide to become a policeman?

B: Well, two of my uncles were on the force, as was my father, until he lost his trigger finger in a railroad accident.

Another colloquial inversion type is the simple exclamatory inversion, as in (25).

(25a) Boy! Did I have a lot of garbage to put up with. (W, p. 60, S.A., receptionist)

(25b) God, have I seen attitudes change! (W, p. 728, L.D., priest)

(25c) And boy, do I remember! (W, p 621, C.M., hospital aide)

This type is found exceedingly rarely, if at all, in literary contexts. The syntax of such constructions was described in N. McCawley (1973). Despite being highly visible (unlike the inversions just discussed), perhaps because they constitute a unique speech act type, they are fairly unremarkable. Nonetheless, they are very colloquial; it may be that rules of decorum that restrict display of emotion are responsible for inhibiting their use in certain kinds of speech situations. These inversions may occur in colloquial writing, for example diaries (26), personal letters, as well (as might inversion after negated verbs, though I haven't come across any).

(26) Was the Mack's face red! (JT, p. 323, "Talk of the Town" piece for the New Yorker)

But I would be surprised to find an inversion like this in a piece of academic prose, or a nineteenth century novel, more or less as in (27).

(27a) (And) would this treatment eliminate the potential, but apparently never realized, series of uvularized consonants which Chomsky and Halle cite!

(27b) Tinker Bell at once popped out of the hat, and did she begin to lure Wendy to her destruction! (apologies to Sir James M. Barrie)

Before concluding this section on colloquial inversions, I want to touch briefly on an exclusively oral use of inversions to demonstrate again why colloquial language must not be confused with spoken language. In the context of play-by-play sportscasting--a linguistically demanding task requiring the identification of individuals in the course of a spontaneous description of a fast-moving, ongoing event--at least five different inversion types are used, as exemplified in (28).[9]

(28a) Underneath is Smith. [Inversion after preposed locative adverb]

(28b) At the line will be Skowronski. [Inversion after preposed locative phrase]

(28c) Stealing it and then losing it was Dave Bonko. [Inversion after preposed present participle]

(28d) Down with the rebound comes Poan. [Inversion after directional adverb]

(28e) Into the ballgame is Dave Brenner. [Inversion after directional phrase]

Despite the fact that these inversions are quite frequent in play-by-play broadcasts (they are the rule, in fact rather than the exception, when the named agent is a syntactic subject), they are not at all characteristic of ordinary spontaneous colloquial discourse. In fact, the one exemplified by (28e), is simply not found in forms of discourse other than sportscasting: while directional phrases with into do occur with a copular verb (as opposed to a verb of motion like come, run), it is only in the idiom be into, meaning "be involved in, interested in," and it is never preposable.

(29a) Don Binner is into entomology.

(29b) *Into entomology is Don Binner.

While forms like those in (28a-d) may occasionally occur in colloquial speech, they are quite rare, and highly rhetorical, about which more below I feel certain that transcripts of natural speech will show that even in an impassioned after-the-game account of a play, even a sportscaster is much more likely to use uninverted forms like those in (30) than inversions like those in (31).

(30a) Smith is/was underneath.

(30b) Skowronski is/was at the line.

(30c) Dave Bonko steals/stole it and then loses/lost it.

(30d) Roan comes/came down with the rebound.

(31a) Underneath is/was Smith.

(31b) At the line is/was Skowronski.

(31c) Stealing it and then losing it is/was Dave Bonko.

(31d) Down with the rebound comes/came Roan.

Indeed, it seems clear that there is little or no significance to the fact that these five inversions are found in this particular kind of spoken language. They merely provide convenient formulae for describing the action of the game which have the double attraction (to a sportscaster) of (a) containing slots for the essential information (location of ball or ball-handler, action of player or ball, name of ball-handler) and (b) allowing naming the ball-handler to be postponed till the end of the sentence, so that the sportscaster has time to identify and recall the name of the ball-handler(s), while imparting the other essential information.

So far is their use in sportscasting from being an important fact about the use of inversions, that any construction which meets criterion (b) might be adopted as a sportscasting formula, and in fact, many other such constructions are employed in just this way. In addition to inversions, announcers use passives, extrapositions, and indirect object constructions, among others, to postpone identification of the ball-handler.

(32a) Here's a reverse lay-up--good--by Dave Skowronski.

(32b) The tip is good by Joe May, his second basket.

(32c) And the rebound goes to Joe May.

Literary Speech and Colloquial Writing

So far I have described inversions that were particularly characteristic of written literary language or spoken colloquial usage. Most inversion types, however, are not rigidly restricted in their use, and can be found in both spoken and written contexts, though most are definitely more literary or more colloquial.

Perhaps I should explain here how I arrived at the classification of inversion usage presented here. Classification of an inversion as literary or colloquial was done partly on the frequency of occurrence in literary or colloquial contexts in my file of more than 360 inversions, and partly on a judgmental basis. (See Figure 1 for a representation of the distribution of inversions in speech and writing.) Some items (e.g., inversion after quotations, negated verbs) were, on inspection of their distribution in my collection, apparently restricted to either written literary or spoken colloquial contexts. Upon reflection, it was equally apparent that the restriction was absolute and representative, that they could not plausibly be used in the other kind of context. Other inversions (e.g., inversion in exclamations, after preposed adjective phrases) occurred overwhelmingly (i.e., as more than 50% of the collected examples) in one or the other kind of context. Here again, reflection on the plausibility of using such forms in the "minority" context was convincing that such usage would be out of the ordinary, and have an especially strong literary tone in speech, or an especially colloquial tone in writing. This was also true of most types that had a substantial distribution in both kinds of contexts. For example, some inversion types sounded distinctly colloquial despite the fact that only 15-30% of the examples in my files were from overheard, reported, or fabricated spontaneous speech. Fifteen to thirty percent is not such a small proportion when it is recalled that such colloquial contexts are vastly underrepresented in my collection. Even in such a work as Terkel (1974), which is more than 85% transcripts of speech, 20 out of the 38 inversions are from Terkel's accompanying written exposition.

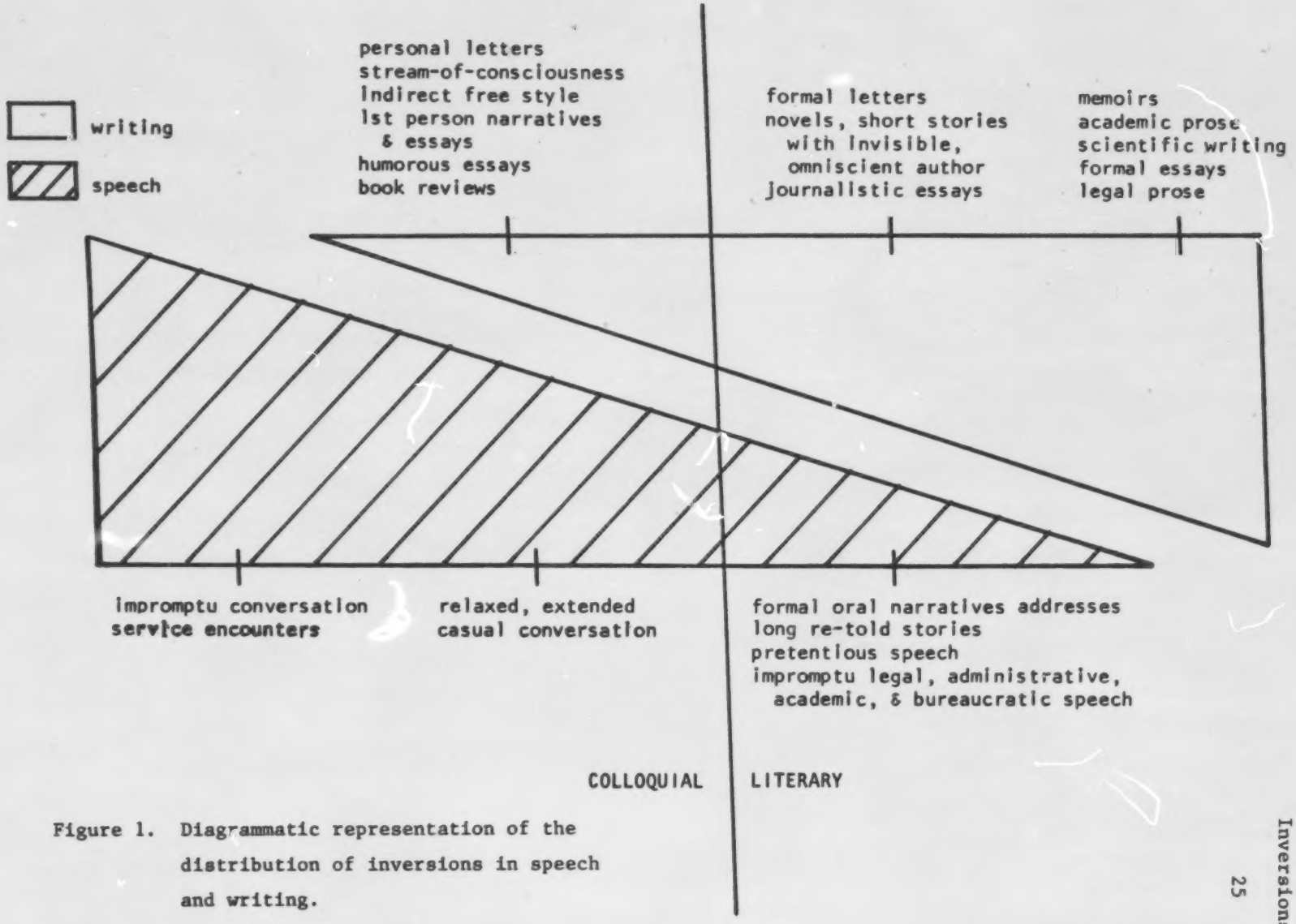

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the distribution of inversions in speech and writing.

Literary Speech

We have already looked at at least one inversion type (after positive degree adverbs) which, while primarily literary, was not impossible in speech (see example 11b). There are quite a few others that are even less marked in speech. Among the most literary-sounding inversions that are to be found in speech are two triggered by negative elements: inversion after nor, and inversion after negative adverbs. Examples are given in (33-34).

(33a) Nor would he have been at a loss if Edwin Potts had been some powerful thug. (PGW, p. 197)

(33b) "Nor can I deal with an account that says, 'Get me a broad.'" (W, p. 493, B.M., sports press-agent)

(34a) Rarely did I hear such overtones of gratitude as went into the utterance of this compound noun. (JOY, p. 136)

(34b) Not until The Book of Splendor (the Zohar) appeared in Spain in the thirteenth century did a formidable metaphysical text on cabalism appear. (JOY, p. 61)

(34c) "Rarely do I put up with it." (W, p. 617, C.M., hospital aide)

(34d) "Only of late, because I'm getting more secure and I'm valued by the agency, am I able to get mad at men and say, 'Fuck off.'" (W, p. 107, B.H., producer)

Between 15 and 30% of my examples of these types are from transcribed or attributed speech (most of them involve first person subjects). They do not sound (to me) particularly pretentious, but they do sound rather bookish. A possible explanation for this will be discussed in Explanations for the Colloquial and Literary Character of Inversions.

Another literary inversion that is not uncommon in speech is the inverted conditional, as in (35).

(35a) "Should I leave this job to go to the bathroom I risk being fired." (W, p. 222, P.S., spotwelder)

(35b) And could there be an excuse for displayed impatience it was right there before them. (DP, p. 449, play review)

(35c) "Were I to live another thirty years--that would make me ninety-five--why not try to play?" (W, p. 600, B.F., jazz musician)

(35d) Were he to carry out his treat of telling all to Tipton Plimsoll, disaster must ensue. (PGW, p. 211)

But inverted conditionals, and inversions after nor and negative adverbs, while not uncommon in speech, are not found in casual conversation or small talk, as the style clash in (fabricated) examples like (36) attests.

(36a) Gee, dinner Thursday? Could I get a babysitter, I'd love to go.

(36b) Oh, good. We didn't get a parking ticket. Nor did we leave the windows open, so the upholstery is still dry.

(36c) No, I haven't seen the 1981 cars at Market Place. Rarely do I go to large enclosed shopping centers.

The preceding three inversion types are all mainly characteristic of expository prose--explanation, analysis, or description of behavior. This is not to say that they do not occur in narrative prose[10]--examples (33a) and (35d) are from a novel--but when they do, it is in the course of an expository digression.

One final inversion which is basically literary, but also finds its way into speech in certain contexts, is the one after preposed adjective phrases, as in (37).

(37a) "Important here is the fact that misleading can also be intentional or unintentional." (overheard)

(37b) Whatever the reason, and economics are a factor (though not so important as they would have us believe), rare is the publisher who cares a fig for attractive design, well-defined printing on quality paper, and a lasting binding. (Smithsonian, August 1978, p. 106)

(37c) Equally obvious, as pointed out on occasion by Matijevich, are the potential advantages for an incumbent to be able to send out congratulatory resolutions to their constituents. (CUC)

It seems fairly obvious that this construction is characteristic of fairly formal, considered forms of discourse. That it sounds stiff and stilted in casual, spontaneous discourse, whether spoken or written, should be evident from the examples in (38).

(38a) I know that going to the camp-out is important to you. But more important is not disappointing your grandparents, who have come 1300 miles to see you. (Cf. [. . .] But it's more important to not . . .)

(38b) Just a note to say we all miss you--Rare is the day that someone doesn't sigh, "I wish Florence was here." (Cf. [. . .] It's a rare day that . . .)

(38c) Equally important are the good manners you showed by writing to thank me. (Letter from Abigail Van Buren in "Dear Abby," CUNG 10-23-80)

Abigail Van Buren might include (38c) in a response published in her column to a letter from a young girl, but it seems less likely that she would use it in a personal letter to a niece or a grandchild.

Two other kinds of inversions that seem to me relatively literary, although they are found in speech, are inversions after locative and directional phrases (39, 40).

(39a) "[. . .], and on Mr. Degan's left is Saul Panzer." (RS, p. 182, Nero Wolfe, introducing principals in a murder investigation to each other)

(39b) Just above him hung a steel-engraving of a chariot-race, the dust flying, the chariots careening wildly, the drivers ferociously lashing their maddened horses, the horses themselves caught by the artist the moment before their hearts burst, and they dropped in their traces. (DP, p. 53, "The Wonderful Old Gentleman")

(39c) Beyond it rose the peopled hills. (RM, p. 47)

(39d) And at the stern, all bound with ropes, sat Princess Tiger Lily, daughter of the Indian chief. (GBPP)

(39e) Under his belt, did they but know it, lay the Ruby Eye. (SJP, p. 23)

(40a) "I'm always afraid that out of the blue is gonna come a bolt of lightning, and [. . .] (Rhoda, on the TV show "Rhoda")

(40b) The trouble here is that when the needles are withdrawn, the holes are still there, and through them quickly drain the flavor-giving juices of the meat. (PAT, feature article by Bill Collins)

(40c) Into the office of a Dr. Nelson, shouting, "Oh, Doctor! My feet!" bursts Mrs. Roberts, an attractive young matron. (SJP, p. 156)

(40d) It burst open, and from it rolled a shining golden egg. (JW)

(40e) Last year we were at London Mills and all of a sudden down the road come a bunch of fellows with bagpipes . . . and kilts and all that. (overheard)

With a few exceptions like (40a,b), most examples of these types are found in narrative or descriptive prose, where they may serve a variety of purposes (Green, 1980), including introducing background and principals (39a, 39b, 39c, 40c, 39d), and highlighting the resolution of some narrative tension (39e, 40d, 40e). These constructions appear, from my materials, to be less common in speech than others already discussed in this section, but that may be merely a function of the fact that my corpus of examples does not contain very many extended oral narratives, where they would be likely to appear. The ideal way to investigate their usage in conversation would be to tape-record individuals in a natural situation where they uninhibitedly and spontaneously recount long narratives with a specific

point, e.g., a party where everyone gets a little drunk. But ethical considerations and the problem of obtaining properly informed consent would seem to require that this remain a thought-experiment.

The fact is that outside of extended narratives, these constructions sound very odd in speech indeed (unlikely, at the least), as the following found examples indicate.

(41a) "I braked," Andrea explained to me later, "but in the ditch were a smashed Cadillac and a wrecked Comanche with hurt people inside." (CUC Special report by JoAnne Reiser)

(41b) "To our right are wide, spreading gardens, rich in every variety of flower; to our left, through the dim mysterious trees, we catch a glimpse of shimmering silver." (PGW, p. 207-208, Gally, describing a property as he imagines it)

Nonetheless, it seems to me that an association of such constructions as (39, 40) with speech, and especially of (40) with excited speech,[11] must be at least a part of what is behind the fact that these constructions are so much more frequent[12] in children's books than in novels and short stories written for adults.

Two final inversion types, inversion after present and past participial phrases (42, 43) are more characteristic of journalistic prose (42c,d; 43e) than anything else, though they do occur in colloquial speech and writing (42a, 43a) and descriptive prose (42b, 43d).

(42a) And standing at the door is Archie Goodwin, [. . .] (Same as 39a)

(42b) Running along the wall was a narrow ledge. (PGW, p. 190)

(42c) Representing Mayberry in the arguments next week will be Stephen P. Hurley, court-appointed appellate defender. (CUC news story by Carol Alexander)

(42d) Hopping around Robert McKinnel's laboratory is proof that cloning works: a frog. (CUC AP wire story)

(43a) Enclosed is a copy of the graduation program. (personal letter)

(43b) And enclosed with your beautiful prints will be a coupon good for $1 OFF any one of these cereals: Kellogg's Corn Flakes [. . .] (cereal box)

(43c) Diametrically opposed was Pauline Kael of the New Yorker. (FM, p. 182)

(43d) The plane circled above the San Francisco area, and spread out under me were the farm where I was born, the little town where my grandparents were buried, the city where I had gone to school, the cemetery where my parents were, the homes of my brothers and sisters, Berkeley, where I had gone to college, and the little house where at that moment, while I hovered high above, my little daughter and my dogs were awaiting my return. (PK, p. 165)

(43e) Reported in satisfactory condition today in the Mercy Hospital intensive care unit were Emery L. Endsley, 46, and Hazel Endsley, 41, both of Mahomet. (CUC news story)

Although (42a) is the only inversion after a participial phrase that I have collected from transcribed or fabricated speech, I would expect to find examples in extended oral narratives or descriptions that serve the same introductory function (Green, 1980) that (42b) and (43d) serve. Nonetheless, occurrences of examples like (43a) in personal letters notwithstanding, we can see that this construction is definitely on the literary side of the literary-colloquial dichotomy. While someone might write (43a) to her daughter, it seems highly unlikely that she would say it to her, in person or over the telephone, in referring to some package or envelope. Similarly, the inversion after a present participial phrase in (44a) sounds much less likely than even the inversion after locative phrase in (44b), though they both serve the same discourse function.

(44) A: Where's my $2 bill?

(a) B: Leaning against my dresser is a linguistic atlas of Oltenia. It's marking the beginning of the index.

(b) B: Next to my dresser is a linguistic atlas of Oltenia. It's marking the beginning of the index.

These constructions are a favorite of newswriters, despite not being explicitly taught in journalism textbooks, in part, no doubt, because of their conciseness in relating new information in a story to information previously presented (a connective function [Green, 1980]). Perhaps this

fact of its distribution contributes to its relative absence in casual speech, by stigmatizing it as journalistic.

Colloquial Writing

In addition to finding literary inversions in a variety of kinds of speech, depending on the kind of inversion, and knowledge of the conventions of its use, we also find colloquial inversions in written language.

Let me take up the most provocative case first--two more negative inversion types. Inversion after negated NPs (45), and the temporal construction in (46), of which the only spoken example I have collected is (45a), are both basically colloquial constructions.

(45a) "You took the words out of my mouth," I said. "I hammered on the door for over half an hour, but not a tumble did I get." (BICI, p. 101, first person narrator of "Be a Cat's Paw; Lose Big Money")

(45b) No trace of his whereabouts could we elicit until our zigzag course led us to Mme. Embonpoint, patronne of the town's leading restaurant, Le Poulet en Empois (The Chicken in Starch). (BICI, p. 251)

(46a) No sooner have I turned my back, a laborious and rather painful procedure these days, than some bright-eyed woman or other rises briskly from her escritoire with a brand-new list of nine or ten ways of preventing something or bringing something to pass. (MW, p. 196)

(46b) Hardly am I back in the Taj Mahal, surrounded by Madeleine Carroll and five hundred million billion trillion dollars, when the masons, carpenters, and assorted technicians arrive, minus tools, but with plenty of noisemakers and confetti.

(46c) No sooner had the publishers sprinkled their books with blacks in middle-class pursuits, no sooner had they pictured 50 percent females throughout (one publisher carefully drew a skirt on half of the decorative stick figures in a math book) and removed mothers from the kitchen, than there was a cry to portray handicapped persons in normal activities (in effect, to "mainstream" the handicapped through instructional materials). (MB, p. 42)

While it is true that only one of these examples is from speech (and that from dialogue fabricated by S. J. Perelman), it is also the case that almost all of the examples I have collected are from narratives written in the first person, and these tend to be more colloquial and personal, imitative of conversation, than more impersonal narratives. Of course this is only suggestive of a colloquial status for these constructions. The proof of the pudding is whether such constructions would sound natural in more formal literary prose. I think not. Imagine (47) or (48) occurring in a scholarly journal or a grant proposal.

(47a) Not a bit of feedback did subjects in this group receive.

(47b) Not a response from a second grader did the researchers include in the ANOVAs.

(48a) Hardly had we administered the materials with the revised distractors in Set 1 when we discovered that the new distractors suffered from the same defects as the old.

(48b) No sooner did we administer the materials with the revised distractors in Set 1 than we discovered that the new distractors suffered from the same defects as the old.

Inversions like those in (45) and (47) sound very emotional to me; sentences like (47) might occur in an informal criticism of some experiment, but it would be considered inappropriate in a (false third person) report of the experiment, and quite possibly in a published criticism. Inversions like (46) and (48) do not strike me as being as highly charged emotionally as inversions after negative noun phrases, but they do strike me as being particularly dramatic, and thus suitable for certain kinds of narrative, whether spoken or merely as if spoken (as in 46a,b), but not for the kind of dispassionate reportage that is required by the editorial traditions of more formal discourse, e.g., scholarly journals. Example (46c) is from a narrative passage in Learning, a popular journal for teachers, on the ins and outs of publishing reading textbooks.

A third inversion type which is characteristic of very colloquial writing and elaborate oral narrative is inversion after temporal phrases, as in (49).

(49a) In ´70 came the Vega. (W, p. 260, G.B., UAW officer)

(49b) No--after Sydney came Fred, then Billy. (DP, p. 200, style indirect libre narration in "Big Blonde")

(49c) When they have passed, comes the last figure of all, a gigantic crocodile. (PP, p. 73)

(49d) Now came the final test. (SJP, p. 23)

No doubt related is a type of inversion with an implied temporal phrase, as in (50), both examples from anecdotes in Leo Rosten´s Joys of Yiddish.

(50a) Came a terrific flash of lightning and clap of thunder. Finkelstein looked up to the heavens, protesting, "I was only asking!" (JOY, p. 194)

(50b) "Comes the revolution," said Misha, "we´ll all eat strawberries and cream." (JOY, p. 112)

At least the former construction appears in expository prose as well as narratives, as in (51), taken from book reviews.

(51a) Now appears The Common Press. (Smithsonian, August 1978, p. XX)

(51b) Next comes "The Sleeper," which begins, ominously, with "What is the matter?" and ends with "May I open the window?" (MW, p. 302, review of a bilingual phrase-book)

(51c) Next comes an effective little interlude about an airplane trip, which is one of my favorite passages in the swift and sorrowful tragedy: [. . .] (MW, p. 303)

But it still seems to me to have a rather chatty tone, inappropriate (52a,b) to formal kinds of discourse, or at least awkward (52c).

(52a) The instructions were read aloud as the subjects read to themselves, directing them to read each story silently as it was shown on the screen. Next came the presentation of the stories, via overhead projector.

(52b) All of Europe was poised and ready for war. Comes the 14th of August, 1914.

(52c) First would apply a fronting rule, perhaps Topicalization, that would apply to (15) An elegant fountain stands in the Italian garden to yield (16) In the Italian garden stands an elegant fountain.[13] (DTL, p. 31)

Let us turn, finally, to one of the more stereotypic of colloquial inversions, inversion after directional adverbs, as in (53).

(53a) "I'm laying around my room, reading a trashy Greek novel, when in comes the head chamberlain of the court, begging me to have dinner with the Empress Livia in her private apartments." (PHC, p. xii)

(53b) "Out come two aldermen, Tom Keane and Paul Wigoda, and they yell at the people, "You should be home with your kids." (W, p. 725, L.D., priest)

(53c) In comes the head of the French department, who says in greeting, "Gentlemen." (personal letter)

(53d) You put the stick in here, and put in the cranker and turn the banker, and out slides a popsicle. (overheard, from a 3-year-old)

(53e) Up leaped the haggard husband. (JOY, p. 134)

It is similar to inversion after directional phrases (40), but even more colloquial--somewhere in between inversion after directional phrases and the here comes construction (18). Like inversion after directional phrases, it is found primarily in narrative discourse, although it does not seem to serve all of the same functions. All of the examples in (53) serve in their contexts to introduce new individuals into the discourse, except (53e), which is the least conversational, and thus, if this is truly a colloquial construction, the least natural. The example in (53e) merely describes an action.

But that use is extraordinarily common in picture books for young children, as in the examples in (54).

(54a) Then off marched the little tailor, cocky as could be, with his thumbs thrust through his boasting belt. (BLT)

(54b) So back he came, looking for his lost shadow and hoping for a story about himself. (GBPP)

It has apparently become part of the conventions of writing such books that this inversion (along with inversions after locative phrases and directional phrases) may be used very frequently, although I have never seen it mentioned in works about writing for children. In the Golden Press version of Peter Pan cited in (54b), there are thirteen instances of inversion constructions--approximately one for every 167 words; in the Barrie original, there are probably no more than 30 inversions of all kinds (I counted 9 after locative and directional phrases), about one for every 1770

words. It may be that the extraordinary frequency in picture books is attributable to an effort to make the text sound exciting, an effort based on the (mostly mistaken) assumption that the construction is emphatic or "excited-sounding," to make the text sound exciting. This is not so implausible when it is recalled that these books are for children who will ask readers to read them over and over; since many readers-aloud lose interest after the first reading, such a text would have the advantage of a built-in counterbalance to the monotonous intonation that might result from being read by a bored adult.

This speculation is to some degree borne out by a comparison of two passages from a book about forest animals, disguised as a story (Dorothy Lathrop's Who Goes There?). The first passage, (55), is patently not a story, yet ends with an inversion, presumably to make it sound like it is exciting action that is being narrated. The second passage, (56), which is much closer to being a real story embedded in the text, does not need an inversion to sound exciting. In (55) the sequence of events related is not a story (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1981): There is no expectation regarding the first squirrel as protagonist, no suspense. But the inversion at the end of the second paragraph is story language--to make it sound like it was a story.

(55) Shiny and red, the apples hung over their heads. One squirrel stood on his hind legs. He stretched up until he was as thin as a weasel, but still the biggest apple hung out of his reach.

Another squirrel leaped to the branch above it. He knew a better way than stretching! He sharp teeth gnawed the string that held it. Down plopped the apple on the first squirrel's head.

(WGT, p. 8)

In (56), on the other hand, we have at least the skeleton of a plot: The squirrels are angry at the crow, but afraid (or too smart) to take direct action. Nonetheless they do act, and their action has an immediate, though indirect, effect consistent with their hopes. But between the description of their action (jumping) and the description of the relevant effects (the crow abandoning the corn), there are five sentences which serve to build suspense about the outcome--will the squirrels get to finish the corn?

(56) "Caw!"

The crow was coming to the picnic. No one wanted him.

"Caw!"

His black wings spread over a dozen backs, and so close that the wind from their flapping ruffled the fur of the other creatures. It blew the chipmunks' stripes crooked.

Did he like mice or corn best? The mice didn't stay to see. They didn't want to be eaten. They flattened their ears and fled across the white snow like shadows.

The chipmunk dropped his nut in alarm and darted up a tree trunk with a shrill, sweet chittering. The squirrels, their

toenails scratching noisily against the bark, scrambled to the very top.

Below them, all alone at the picnic, the crow was gobbling corn.

He would gobble everything else!

The squirrels leaned over the branches and shouted at him things they would never have dared to say on the ground. Their tails flicked angrily, and they jumped with rage until the branches shook under them.

Suddenly all the snow with which these were piled toppled and fell. With a soft thud, it landed right on the astonished crow's back. It almost buried him! He squawked. And the squirrels shrieked with delight.

The crow forgot about corn and forgot about mice. He shook off the snow and sullenly flapped up through the tree tops. (WGT, pp. 16-18)

And significantly, there is no inversion here. There could have been. The relevant paragraph could have read:

> Suddenly down plopped all the snow with which these were piled on the astonished crow's back. It almost buried him! He squawked. And the squirrels shrieked with delight.

But the anecdote is exciting by itself; because it builds and resolves suspense, it does not need special constructions to make it sound like it <u>had been</u> suspenseful.

On the other hand, the extraordinary frequency of inversion after preposed directional adverbs in children's books might be attributable to an attempt to make the prose sound as if it were a story being told, based on the assumption (again largely mistaken) that this construction is especially characteristic of natural speech, for there is an old tradition of writing children's books with references to the reader and the "narrator" (and sometimes even to the book itself), which seem clearly to have been intended to make the story when read aloud to a child seem as if the reader-aloud were actually telling it. Some examples.

> Lucie opened the door: and what do you think there was inside the hill?--a nice clean kitchen with a flagged floor and wooden beams--just like any other farm kitchen. (TW, p. 21)

> And instead of a nice dish of minnows--they had a roasted grasshopper with lady-bird sauce; which frogs consider a beautiful treat; but I think it must have been nasty! (JF, p. 59)

> Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Alice: and she had a very curious dream. Would you like to hear what it was that she dreamed about? (NA, p. 1)

> [. . .] And then what do you think happened to her? No, you'll never guess! I shall have to tell you again. (NA, p. 7)

> Just look at the picture and you'll <u>see</u> how tall she got! (NA, p. 8)
>
> I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, "Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever?" (PP, p. 1)
>
> [. . .] "There are such a lot of them," he said. "I expect she is no more."
>
> I expect he was right, for fairies don't live long, but they are so little that a short times seems like a good while to them. (PP, p. 232)

The Winnie-the-Pooh stories are written as stories <u>told</u> by the author <u>to</u> Winnie-the-Pooh, at Christopher Robin's request (WTP, p. 4); as such, they are embedded in a skeleton story about Christopher Robin and the narrator, addressed to the reader:

> Winnie-the-Pooh. When I first heard his name, I said, just as you are going to say, "But I thought he was a boy?"
>
> "So did I," said Christopher Robin.

I say that the assumption that inversions make text sound like speech is largely mistaken, despite calling this construction basically colloquial, because it is in fact only the inversions with <u>In come</u> and <u>Out come</u> that abound in conversational discourse (at least in my collection); inversions with other prepositions and more specific main verbs have a decidedly literary flavor. In any case, at least in the instance of the Big Golden

Books Peter Pan, it seems clear that the high proportion of inversions and other dramatic, emphatic language (exclamations and interjections) is the result of a concerted effort to make what is essentially a story summary sound like a real story. Its total length is about 2200 words. Peter loses his shadow, finds it, and gets it sewn back on in 81 words. One can see that there is no space for building suspense.

So, inversion after a directional adverb is sometimes a colloquial construction (with come after in, out), sometimes (with other prepositions and verbs) a fairly literary one, restricted pretty much to narratives. Part of this restriction may be due to content--directional adverbs may not figure too often in expository discourses, and even when they might, in formal prose they are likely to be replaced with Latinate verbs that incorporate the verbal and prepositional meanings in a single word (as in 57a). But some of the restriction is surely a matter of style or register. Examples like those in (57) seem unlikely to occur in either the scholarly or semi-scholarly press.

(57a) Thirty-six Candida alba seeds were planted in each of the soil conditions just described. Up came 32 to 35 in each condition within five months.

(Cf. Thirty-two to 35 germinated in each condition within five months.)

(57b) For the first twenty years or so of the history of transformational grammar, proponents were involved in lively discussion of the properties of transformational rules, of which it appeared there were a large number in English--at least thirty or forty. But in 1976, around turned Chomsky and proposed that there are only two transformational rules. (Cf. But in 1976, Chomsky turned around and proposed [. . .])

An example like (57a) might conceivably appear in a publication like Organic Gardening (though not in Scientific American or a scholarly journal), although the passive in the first sentence would probably be changed to an active, but (57b) would sound odd in even a popular history of modern linguistics.

Explanations for the Colloquial and Literary Character of Inversions

Why is it, we must finally ask, that some inversions are literary, and some are colloquial, and some are sort of one, and some are sort of the other? With such diverse kinds of language, it is not surprising that the answer is not simple or uniform. A few inversions seem to be literary or colloquial for functional or "organic" reasons connected to their construction. And a few more seem to be the way they are because of facts about their components. But regardless of the historical origins of particular inversions, it may be that now many are the way they are just by convention: One has to learn, as one becomes enculturated, which constructions belong to which register.

Functional Explanations

Certain inversions, namely inversions after preposed participial phrases (42, 43), are predominantly literary, in fact predominantly journalistic, because their constructional function, that of connecting the old information repeated in the phrasal connective to the new information expressed in the postposed subject (Green, 1980) in a manner sparing of words and space represents a value esteemed more by the profession of journalism than by the speaking or the writing public generally.

Other inversions, inversions after nor and after preposed adjectives in particular, appear to be basically literary because the construction seems to imply deliberation on the part of the user, more deliberation than is likely to be possible under the social pressures of spontaneous conversation to "keep the conversation going" (see Tannen, 1979). It is hard to imagine a heated argument, for example, that could contain (58a) or (58b).

(58a) But I didn't take the car without asking! Nor did I total it at a drive-in!

(Cf. [. . .] And I didn't total it at a drive-in [either]!)

(58b) Yes, I know I'm supposed to be in by midnight. But important to me is getting in with the right people, and I can't do that if I have to leave just when we're getting ready to do something good. "Excuse me. I have to go. My dad says I have to be home at midnight."

(Cf. [. . .] But it's important to me to get in [. . .])

Some inversions seem to be basically colloquial in character because the functions that they typically serve are functions of colloquial speech, for example, the expression of the utterer's affective state. In particular, exclamations and the inversions after negative NPs (25, 45) belie a highly charged affective state (surprise, concern), and presumably are intended to indicate that state. This is the sort of thing that can happen in interpersonal communication (which is a jargonistic way of saying col-loquial), but trafficking in emotions is generally impossible or taboo in written materials that are intended to aid in the transfer of "information" in an objective and impersonal manner. (Literary prose that seeks to imitate speech, for whatever reason, is generally free to employ colloquial constructions.) Books and faceless authors who avoid self-mention are not in the business of having feelings that they could want to display. Similarly, the no sooner . . . than/hardly . . . when construction (46) seems intended to indicate that the event of the second clause was a surprise given the event of the first; cf. the oddness of (59a) to the naturalness of (59b).

(59a) Hardly had he put the Crest on his toothbrush when he began to brush his teeth.

(59b) (=46b) Hardly am I back in the Taj Mahal, surrounded by Madeleine Carroll and five hundred million billion trillion dollars, when the masons, carpenters, and assorted technicians arrive, minus tools but with plenty of noisemakers and confetti. (SJP, p. 244)

Again, "objective" writers and books, and omniscient, "invisible" authors do not belong to a category of which surprise is credible.

Another inversion that is restricted to colloquial contexts for functional reasons is the Here comes construction (18). It seems to be restricted to present tense, speaker-oriented deixis (Here comes/goes, There comes/goes) because it is basically a description of action occurring simultaneously with the act of utterance, in the presence of the addressee. It follows that it will not be usable in normal written contexts (excluding, for instance, stream-of-consciousness writing, and style indirect libre), since the use of written language usually presupposes that the addressee is remote in both time and place from the source. Ordinarily what is referred to when this inversion is appropriately used is the physical motion of some physical object to the locus of the speaker. Here and come are generally not used with abstract senses (*Here comes Spring, but cf. 18b). This would contribute as a circumstantial factor to the absence of this inversion from formal literary contexts to the extent that they tend not to be concerned with physical motion.

Circumstantial Explanations

The distribution of other inversions is perhaps better explained by facts about the distribution of crucial components than by facts about the nature of the construction as a whole. This is not a particularly interesting kind of explanation, although it is perhaps the most common kind of explanation for distributions in analyses of syntax, for in this case it merely reduces the problem to a previously unsolved problem.

For example, the reason that inversion after preposed quotations (2a) and in as-pronominalizations (23) are exclusively literary is probably that the preposed quotations and the conjunction as are themselves pretty exclusively literary. Thus, the uninverted (60) is no more likely in conversation than the inverted (7), and the inverted as-pronominalization in (24) is as unconversational as it is in straight order, as in (61a), and as unconversational as the conjunction as in (61b), though the comparative as in (61c) is not particularly unconversational.

(60) "Sugar is recommended in this cereal," Robin announced/remarked/said.

(7) [. . .] "Sugar is recommended in this cereal," announced/remarked/said Robin.

(61a) Winston tastes good, as a cigarette should.

(61b) I didn't pick up any peanut butter at the store as I didn't have any money or checks with me.

(61c) Jonah is just as aggressive as Sarah is.

Of course, it remains to explain why preposed quotations and the conjunction as are literary.

Similarly, the colloquial character of inversion after directional adverbs (53, 54) is surely attributable to either of two facts about the verb-adverb combinations which are invertible (e.g., come/fly/run out, come/fall down, go/run/crawl away, come/fly/rush . . . in, fly/dash over, come/turn around, come/rise up, but not, e.g., move away, wither away, enter in, burn out, wear down, break up, etc.). Either (a) the invertible Anglo-

Saxon phrasal verbs are decidedly colloquial in nature, so that in more literary discourse they are likely to be replaced by single latinate words, removing even the possibility of preposing the adverb to trigger inversion; or (b) the invertible constructions are descriptive of actions (manners of locomotion, to be precise) that are ordinarily irrelevant to the purposes of uncolloquial literary prose. Under what circumstances would it be appropriate in a discourse that was not attempting to imitate conversational narrative to say that an individual crawled, crept, flew, or swam, rather than that he, she or it merely moved, came or went, entered or departed, rose or sank? In any case, again we have still to explain why some verb-adverb collocations are "decidedly colloquial" and others are not. Here, we have at least a glimmer of an explanation for this fact. They are colloquial because (a) they are Anglo-Saxon in origin, and (b) all other things being equal, Anglo-Saxon expressions are more colloquial than roughly synonymous forms of Classical derivation (cf. take in:collect, bring around:resuscitate, breathe in:inhale, want:desire, baby:infant, talk:converse, chew:masticate, etc.). This explanation is of the sort proposed by J. McCawley (1978): A form with apparently general usability may be in use basically limited to contexts where no special form is available for the relevant subpart of its domain. McCawley argues that we do not say light red for the hues that pink refers to, even though we say light blue, light green, for analogous hues, because we have the term pink available; if we used light red, we would imply reference to some hue that pink did not refer to. Similarly, if general forms are used in a domain

where conventionally literary forms are available, the implication is that the form of the discourse is purposely informal and colloquial. If this implication is not apt, the discourse is bizarre.

But in most of the other cases (the second explanation for the distribution of inversions after directional adverbs was a functional one), there appears to be no real synchronic explanation; it is simply conventional that quotations are not preposed in conversational discourse, simply conventional that the conjunction as is part of the literary dialect.

Conventional Explanations

Likewise, it seems to be simply conventional that inversion after locative (39) and directional (40) phrases, after negative adverbs (34), in conditionals (35), and in the so/such (. . . that) constructions (5, 6) is essentially limited to literary usage. In claiming that this restriction is conventional, I am claiming that it does not follow from any principle of universal grammar, any innate mechanism, or (at least directly) from any functional principle, but rather that it is an aspect of the culture which, like the conventions of politeness, is learned largely by observation and imitation. And there is evidence, I should point out, both that the literary constructions are learned and that the distinction between literary constructions and ordinary ways of speaking is learned at an early age. It is not uncommon for young children who have been read to extensively to fail to notice that some constructions are used only in books, and begin, around age four, to use "bookish" constructions in their own natural speech. Nor is it unusual to find such children, later on, while still far from

literate, picking up their books and inventing stories, replete with literary constructions which they never use in their speech (anymore), and "reading" them aloud with the intonational inflections used by adults reading aloud. The literary inversions they use most often are inversions after directional adverbs and locative phrases. This is hardly surprising, since the inversions in the children's books that might be read to them are primarily of these two types. Similarly, there are some inversions which appear to be conventionally colloquial (inversion after negated verbs [15], and implied temporal expressions [50]), although it is probably more correct to say that they are conventionally nonliterary: One does not learn to use them only in conversational discourse; one learns (generally via explicit instruction) not to use them in formal literary discourse. Strictly speaking, the inversion after so and neither, with identity-of-sense verb-phrase deletion is probably not conventionally anything in particular. Although it alternates with an uninverted construction with final too/either, as in (62, 63), there seems to be no colloquial-literary or spoken-written difference between the two constructions, although there is a greater possibility of not deleting with too/either in literary discourse, than with initial So/Neither.

(62a) (=21a) It'll get your clothes pretty clean, but so will the others.

(62b) It'll get your clothes pretty clean, but the others will (get them pretty clean) too.

(63a) (=22b) None of the examples in (13) are contrastive, as noted above, and neither are many of the other tokens in the corpus.

(63b) None of the examples in (13) are contrastive, as noted above, and many of the other tokens in the corpus aren't (contrastive) either.

Still, the inversion is perfectly unremarkable in both conversational and literary discourse.

It does not appear to be possible, then, to give a uniform explanation for the distribution of colloquial or literary inversions, or even for inversions characteristic of narrative: Two are conventionally literary (apparently)--inversion after directional and locative phrases, one conventionally nonliterary (after temporal phrases), and one both circumstantially and conventionally colloquial (after directional adverbs). The overall distribution of these inversions seems hardly likely to be a simple function of their use in narrative discourses.

Proportions

Is it possible to explain why the literary inversion types outnumber the colloquial inversion types, by about 2 to 1? It has been suggested that to the extent that inversions are optional and "stylistic" variations, it is natural that they belong to the written-literary register, where production of utterances involving deviations from "canonical" forms can be done at a leisurely, considered, deliberate pace; and that to the extent that inversions are obligatory, are the canonical forms, it is natural that they occur freely in spontaneous speech. Suppose that we ignore the problems in

distinguishing optimal "stylistic" variants from obligatory forms of expression, so that we can say, for instance, that the difference between Is John here? and John's here? is qualitatively different from the difference between Standing in the corner was a Tiffany lamp and A Tiffany lamp was standing in the corner. Still, there are problems in supporting this explanation. First of all, almost all inversions after a preposed element are obligatory given the preposing of that element. This holds for both literary inversions like those after negative adverbs, participles, adjectives, and locative and directional phrases, and colloquial inversions like those after negative NPs, no sooner, so/neither, here/there.[14] (The sole exception is after directional adverbs, the most conversational of literary inversions.) And if we say that we are talking about the construction, not just the inversion, all of the preposings turn out to be optional, so that will not distinguish the colloquial from the literary inversions, either. Second, both of the colloquial inversions that do not involve preposing are also syntactically optional, as shown by the uninverted exclamations and negated verbs in (64).

(64a) He was mad!

(64b) Nobody don't break up no/a fight. (after Labov, 1972)

It will not help to try to save some instances from being classified as optional by saying that the two variants have different meaning, connotations, implications, or uses; almost all syntactic variants differ in this way[15]--A-Raising, Passive, Extraposition, Neg-Raising, etc. This list is large and the literature burgeoning (Borkin, 1974; Davison, 1980; Prince, 1978, Note 1; Horn, Note 4, etc.).

Conclusion

While inversions of one sort or another are distributed over the whole range of spoken and written language, it is not along the spoken-written dimension, but along (and 30 miles either side of, as they say in the tornado warnings) a colloquial-literary dimension, which cuts across the spoken-written classification.

Some of these inversions are colloquial or literary for functional reasons, some for reasons having to do with properties of their component parts, and some are just conventionally colloquial or literary, and must be learned as a person becomes literate, along with the conventions about capital letters and periods, and writing from left to right or vice versa.

Regardless of whether inversions are base-generated, or generated by transformations, about which I have made no claims or assumptions, the analysis presented here has implications for a general theory of linguistic competence, encompassing not only the knowledge of grammar that tells which forms are "in the language," and which are not, but also knowledge of language use, or discourse competence, which, given a semantics, tells when certain forms are appropriate and what they're appropriate for (see Green, in press). For it seems from this investigation of English usage that speakers distinguish not only a literary register and a colloquial register, but also distinct styles of literary speech, and perhaps, if they are writers, styles or levels or registers of colloquial writing. If so, then their knowledge of the use of their language is perhaps more sophisticated than might be supposed by someone who assumed that only writers know the

literary "dialect." I am not claiming that all speakers can do this equally well (see 41), or even that all can do it.[16] This is one of the crucial differences between knowledge of language, which all speakers have, by definition, and knowledge about the language (or knowledge of language use), which is a kind of knowledge of culture, and may be acquired much more slowly than knowledge of the language, continuing no doubt past middle age. Some people are more sensitive to it than others, and it is a good part of what makes some people more articulate than others.

This knowledge is not a kind of grammar, not even "discourse grammar," but knowledge about how to exploit "sentence grammar" for rhetorical purposes. I have sketched elsewhere (Green, in press) how this might work, but the bulk of the descriptive and developmental corroboration remains to be fleshed out.

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2. Green, G. M. Remarks on a proposal presented by Thomas Dieterich and Guy Carden at the NWAVE-VII Colloquium on the validation of introspective judgments. Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois, 1978.

3. Horn, L., Green, G. M., & Morgan, J. Here comes the bus. Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois.

4. Horn, L. Presupposition; variations on a theme. Unpublished manuscript, University of Wisconsin.

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Appendix A

Sources

APN A. P. Nilsen. Sexism in English: A feminist view. In P. Eschholz & A. Rosa (Eds.), Subject and strategy: A rhetoric reader. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

BICI S. J. Perelman. Baby, it's cold inside. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

BLT The brave little tailor. Racine, Wis.: Golden Press.

CUC Champaign-Urbana Courier.

CUNG Champaign-Urbana News Gazette.

DP The portable Dorothy Parker. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. (Copyright 1944, 1973 by Viking Press)

DS D. Sayers. Strong poison. New York: Avon Books, 1967. (Copyright 1930)

DTL D. T. Langendoen. The problem of grammatical relations in surface structure. In K. Jankowsky (Ed.), Proceedings of the Georgetown University Roundtable. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1973. Pp. 27-37.

EP E. Prince. A comparison of left-dislocation and topicalization in discourse. Unpublished manuscript, 1980.

FM F. Manchel. King Kong: Remaking a classic. In P. Eschholz & A. Rosa (Eds.), Subject and strategy: A rhetoric reader. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978. Pp. 180-192.

GBPP Peter Pan, a Big Golden Book. Racine, Wis.: Golden Press.

JB J. Baldwin. Stranger in the village. In P. Eschholz & A. Rosa (Eds.), Subject and strategy: A rhetoric reader. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978. Pp. 349-361.

JF B. Potter. The tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher. New York: Warne, 1906.

JOY L. Rosten. The joys of Yiddish. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.

JT J. Thurber. The beast in me, and other animals. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1948.

JW J. Williams. The king with six friends. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1968.

MB M. Bowler. The making of a textbook. Learning, March 1978, 38-43.

MW J. Thurber. My world and welcome to it. New York: Harcourt, 1942.

NA L. Carroll. The nursery "Alice." London: Macmillan, 1890.

PAT Palo Alto Times.

PGW P. G. Wodehouse. Full moon. Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1947.

PHC S. J. Perelman. Perelman's home companion. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.

PK P. Kael. Movies on television. In P. Eschholz & A. Rosa (Eds.), Subjects and strategy: A rhetoric reader. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

PP J. M. Barrie. Peter Pan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.

PW M. Twain. Pudd'nhead Wilson. New York: New American Library, 1964.

RM R. McDonald. The Wycherly woman. New York: Bantam Books, 1963.

RS R. Stout. Might as well be dead. New York: Viking Press, 1956.

SFC The San Francisco Chronicle.

SJP The best of S. J. Perelman. New York: Random House, 1947.

TLCC A. F. Johnston. The little colonel's chum: Mary Ware. Boston: The Page Company, 1908.

TW B. Potter. The tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle. London: Warne, n.d.

W S. Terkel. Working. New York: Avon Books, 1974.

WGT D. P. Lathrop. Who goes there? New York: Macmillan, 1953.

WTP A. A. Milne. Winnie-the-Pooh. New York: Dutton, 1926.

Footnotes

[1]Source citations are given in parentheses after cited examples. A list of abbreviations used can be found in Appendix A.

[2]Depending on whether inversions over be are counted separately from other noncopular verbs (from whose syntax theirs differs), and on whether phrasal adverbial triggers are distinguished from nonphrasal adverbial triggers (again, the distributional properties are somewhat different), the number is between 8 and 15.

[3]In the broadest sense. Sources there, as well as here, include newspapers, children's books, and instructions, as well as narratives and essays by Dorothy Parker, S. J. Perelman, James Thurber, Brendan Gill, Mark Twain, and P. J. Wodehouse.

[4]This too has been attacked as a source of data, unfairly I think. Green (Note 2) elaborates on this.

[5]"On the other hand, it is hardly credible, after a look through the collection shortly to follow, that the writers can have chosen these inversions either as the natural way of expressing themselves or as graceful decoration; so unnatural and so ungraceful are many of them." (Fowler, 1923, p. 14)

[6]Ten-page samples from five books for adults showed inversion being used for from 0% to 35% of the directly quoted utterances. (The extent to which low inversion counts were a result of the use of inversion-blocking pronominal subjects, or the absence of quote frames altogether, was not taken into account. Probably it would be impossible to rule this out fully

as a factor, since it would have to involve being able to predict pronominal reference with absolute certainty.) Large and/or exhaustive samples from two basal readers and four picture books showed inversion for from 41% to 73% of the instances of direct quotation. (Similarly, this figure may be inflated as a result of the peculiar practice in basals of not using pronominal reference where it would be naturally used in other narrative genres.)

[7]Of course, they may be uttered in the process of composing them at official meetings. Thus, from a newspaper report:

> "Be it further resolved that copies of this resolution be sent to no one," Matijevich said. (CUC)

[8]The interesting properties of this construction first came to my attention when I needed, many years ago, to put a tag on (18a):

(*)Here comes the bus, { doesn't it? / isn't it? / doesn't here? / doesn't there? }

Some of their syntactic properties are discussed in Horn, Green, and Morgan (Note 3).

[9]All examples are from 1977 TV and radio broadcasts of games in a state high school basketball tournament.

[10]By narrative prose I mean accounts of events with a plot, i.e., with conflict, suspense, resolution, etc. (see Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1981).

[11]Due, no doubt, to its capacity to serve the resolution function (Green, 1980).

[12]By, I would estimate, at least a factor of 10. See the subsection on Colloquial Writing, below, for more discussion.

Most of my examples of inversion after preposed directional phrases are either from children's books or from S. J. Perelman, whose highly idiosyncratic style is marked by the use of formal literary conventions in the treatment of rather trivial topics, with an incongruous handful of very colloquial expressions thrown in, as in this excerpt.

> Should he prove reluctant, simply read him Mr. Gaba's article, and if that fails to stun him, sap him just below the left ear with a blackjack. (SJP, p. 168)

[13]Notice how much more awkward the simple present (applies) (more usual for this construction) would be, and how much substituting comes the application of for would apply would contribute to an inappropriate and pointless switch of styles.

[14]Of course, inversions that invert over main verbs are blocked if the subject is pronominal:

*Onto the field ran he.

Onto the field he ran.

But if the subject is nonpronominal, these are just as obligatory as the auxiliary inversions:

[15]The strongest cases for equivalence that I know of are Dative Movement and Particle Movement cases, and even these are probably not water-tight.

[16]Although I would suspect that even illiterate adults have a pretty fair conception of what is "bookish" language and what is not.

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